



July 18, 2007

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Peterson:

On behalf of the United States Telecom Association (USTelecom), I am writing to commend you and the members of the House Agriculture Committee for your efforts on the Rural Development Title (Title VI) of the 2007 Farm Bill. USTelecom, which represents innovative companies ranging from the smallest rural telecoms in the nation to some of the largest corporations in the U.S. economy, shares the Committee's goal of improving the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) broadband program.

We appreciate the Committee's work in recognizing the critical role that RUS can play in helping bring broadband to unserved rural areas. USTelecom believes the legislation will help advance the deployment of broadband and is pleased the Committee included many of the suggestions that we provided to improve the program. The bill will better target RUS broadband loans to unserved rural areas and increase the number of companies eligible to utilize the program.

In addition, I want to express my support of the amendment that Rep. Zack Space will offer to Title VI of the Farm Bill. This amendment will further enhance the work of the Committee in advancing broadband deployment by extending the amortization period for broadband loans, reducing burdensome paperwork requirements, addressing loan security requirements and providing additional congressional oversight of the program.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you, Ranking Member Goodlatte, Chairman McIntyre, Ranking Member Musgrave and Committee staff to improve this valuable program that will help achieve our shared objective of having broadband available to all rural Americans. We look forward to working with members of the House and Senate to ensure this critical legislation becomes law.

Sincerely,

Walter B. McCormick, Jr.